



Toward a Public Philosophy of Public Administration: A Civic Perspective of the Public

Author(s): Curtis Ventriss

Source: *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 49, No. 2, Special Issue: Minnowbrook II. Changing Epochs of Public Administration (Mar. - Apr., 1989), pp. 173-179

Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Society for Public Administration

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/977339>

Accessed: 07/01/2010 17:17

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=black>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Blackwell Publishing and American Society for Public Administration are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Public Administration Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>



Toward a Public Philosophy of Public Administration: A Civic Perspective of the Public

Curtis Ventriss, University of Vermont

What role should public administration play in the development of a public philosophy? At first glance, it seems presumptuous for public administration even to think about developing such a grandiose idea as a public philosophy. However, in an era of fiscal limits and declining confidence in public institutions, the abdication of responsibility for development of a public philosophy adequate to the issues the field faces might result in a political wilderness where there is, to use Richard Pells's apocalyptic phrase, "action without theory, realism without imagination, movement without vision."¹ Even if one dismisses Pells's phrasing as too overdrawn, the field could surely fall prey to what S. M. Miller aptly referred to as the "blind forces of the factual."² To be walled in by the blind forces of the factual runs the serious risk of keeping administrators cloistered in the administrative world of what they think they do best: implementing managerial and procedural reforms. As sufficient as this may appear to some, it ultimately leads to a pedantic public purpose. It becomes pedantic, as Louis Gawthrop points out, because such a cloistered existence divorces public administration from the public it serves and, more critically, it fails "to revive the character of citizenship and the notion of the citizen."³

In short, the intellectual malaise which confronts the field has less to do with managerial or analytical competency or even intellectual commitment to democratic principles (as important as these factors are) than it has to do with *an inability to articulate a public philosophy central to public administration's civic purpose and duty and to the reexamination of the field's role in shaping public affairs*. Thus, a reexamination of a *theory of governance*

and a *new substantive relationship with the public* is needed in an era when public administration, according to the ASPA Centennial Agendas Project, is "alienated from society, bedeviled by complexity, and guided by limited knowledge and understanding."⁴ A new public philosophy is now called for which reinvigorates the best in public administration's tradition while envisioning new and creative roles that the field can and should play in the future.

If this contention is accepted, a nagging question needs posing: how would one define a public philosophy as it relates to public administration? As applied to public administration, a public philosophy is less a vehicle to develop some overarching framework to define or interpret political events than it is a prerequisite to formulate a new substantive outlook on public affairs—one that redefines the field by redefining the meaning of "the public" and the field's relationship to it. As important as it is for public administration to adhere to American regime values, these values may be substantively diminished if those in the field do not maintain a vigilante view of the public consonant with those values. Thus it is argued here that a public philosophy of public administration must be formulated, not upon the romantic and technocratic characteristics of past efforts, but instead upon a revitalized concept of the public that emphasizes public interdependency, public learning, a new public language, and a critical evaluation of the relationship between the role of the state and public administration. Such a public philosophy has important implications for the respective responsibilities of both academic and professional public administration.

The thesis of this article is that a public philosophy of public administration needs to be formulated. It must not be based upon romantic and technocratic approaches as past efforts have been. It must rest instead upon a revitalized concept of the public that stresses the importance of public interdependency, public learning, public language, and a critical evaluation of the relationship between the role of the state and public administration. This emphasis has important implications for the respective responsibilities of both academicians and practicing administrators.

Contemporary Public Administration

In 1981, on a cold brisk January day in Washington, Ronald Reagan, the newly inaugurated President of the United States stepped up to the podium to outline a "new beginning" that he believed represented a definitive break with the past. His campaign rhetoric attacked alleged deleterious effects of social programs that Reagan said had produced a government too big, too intrusive, and too expensive, and which gave too much power to faceless bureaucrats. His message, in many respects, represented a Pre-New Deal public philosophy that found new relevance in a time when many questioned whether America had lost its self confidence. According to one astute political analyst, Reagan's public philosophy is tied to four basic premises, all of which shun abstract consistency: anti-government nationalism, communitarian individualism, free-market radicalism, and a nostalgic assurance of America's role in the future.⁵ Although empirical data on public perceptions still indicate that the majority of the public strongly support governmental social programs like Social Security and Medicare,⁶ Reagan successfully shifted the public debate from expanding or initiating new social programs to curtailing the growth of domestic spending in areas other than defense. Moreover, while Reagan's public philosophy hardly replaced interest-group liberalism, his Administration cleverly controlled the focus and tenor of discussion. Critics of Reagan's public philosophy have been content, for the most part, to engage in a statistical pillow fight about how the impacts of Reagan's policies adversely affected the poor and the middle class. Those who question the efficacy of his approach, however, have abdicated a broader responsibility when it comes to how such statistics add up to a new public philosophy.

Needless to say, Reagan's public philosophy made many in public administration increasingly nervous and defensive, and with good reason. What made some even more nervous was that the intellectual roots that were instrumental in legitimizing Reagan's general approach came, in part, from the neoconservative movement. Not all people associated with this school of thought agreed with Reagan's policy proposals, but collectively most tried to repudiate much of the Great Society's version of the welfare state by claiming that it permitted the growth of a paternalistic state which has overloaded government, thus rendering it less manageable. These critics asserted that the redistributive state had promised too many entitlements, too much democracy, and too much equality.⁷

In the eyes of its critics, public administration--caught awkwardly in the middle of this onslaught--was seen as part of the problem. In particular, the new public administration sadly found itself in an intellectual swamp with only a modicum of theoretical legitimacy. More importantly, the new public administration and other theoretical cohorts became relatively immobilized when dealing with the historically ingrained issue of the "conflict between mass democracy and elite professionalism in the American political structure [which] is what really shapes the American meaning of bureaucracy and American attitudes toward it."⁸

Not surprisingly, by the 1980s, one proclivity was to further depoliticize the field's public language under the rubric of fostering managerial efficiency and economy. Although this inclination is certainly understandable, it only exacerbated the constant wavering of the field between theoretical despair and managerial technocracy. This wavering, moreover, intensified the general uneasiness which has been present in public administration since its early beginnings: the field lacks a coherent theoretical foundation, thus borrowing theories and analytical approaches that more or less sustain public administration's pragmatic appeal.⁹ While some have argued that this amalgamation of theories and analytical approaches is more of a virtue than a vice, it has done little, if anything, to temper the incessant tendency by public administration to emulate the presumed efficiencies of business administration. Perhaps this tendency will always be prevalent in public administration, but it carries the risk of incorporating business values that are inconsistent with the field's public purpose. Business values are not American regime values--only their tragic parody.

In its own messy way, public administration appears to be acknowledging that any theoretical concern outside a managerial and economic mind-set only leads, in the end, to utopian hopes and emotional pleas. In other words, the respectability and legitimacy of the field seems now to rest uncomfortably on how well public administration actually succeeds in marrying scientific rationality with the calculus of efficiency, along with appropriate courteous hymns to the public interest and professional responsibility. Whatever the merits of this approach, it unfortunately serves notice to those who advocate exclusively normative goals for the field that what cannot be demonstrated as empirically valid or pragmatically useful comes dangerously close to being folly. Simply put, normative theorizing, even if clothed in the substantive garments of public relevancy, is becoming viewed as ill-suited to deal with the stark administrative realities which are associated with the rough-and-ready world of the political marketplace. Theorizing in economics is tolerated because it can lead to analysis and can be utilized by decision makers. On the other hand, normative-theory building, as seen by a growing constituency of scholars, leads to one unmistakable thing: theoretical (and practical) ambiguity. When all is said and done, utilitarianism is still a widely accepted academic and professional philosophy which guides America's approach to social problems.

This characterization of conceptual approaches is probably overdrawn given that the political geometry of the field is shaped by many intersecting lines of human inquiry. Nonetheless, this begs the important question as to whether any of these approaches can forge new linkages to "the public" while defining the field's future role and public purpose in shaping social and political affairs. Public administration's weakness in answering this question offers the opportunity for others to take advantage of this vulnerability. One of the key elements in developing a new link with the public is to examine public administration's relationship with the state and the implication of that

relationship. This issue is pivotal because it deals to a large degree with the very *raison d'être* of American public administration.

State and the Public

Max Weber noted that no modern state can exist without an administrative system. Similarly, Carl Frederick argued that "administration is the core of the modern [state]."¹⁰ While the relationship between an administrative system and the modern state seems self evident today, the definition of the state is more elusive. Although the meaning of the state is fraught with difficulties (as political scientists openly admit), Morton Fried has provided a good working definition: "A state is not simply a legislature, an executive body, a judiciary system, an administrative bureaucracy, or even a government . . . a state is better viewed as the complex of institutions by means of which the power of society is organized."¹¹ Arguing from a related perspective, Edward Laumann and David Knoke declare that the state is not a unitary actor, "but a complex entity spanning multiple policy domains, comprised of both governmental organizations and those private-sector participants whose interest must be taken into account."¹²

If these definitions are correct, they raise some interesting questions for public administration. Because public administration is largely regarded as a state function, does this mean, as some on the political left maintain, that public administration plays a crucial role in legitimizing the present arrangement of societal power? Or more cynically, "is public administration, when stripped of its normative overtones, nothing more than an instrument of the state that acts as the authoritative structure promoting an artificial and ultimately unsatisfying social harmony?"¹³ And finally, has public administration fallen into a Hegelian trap that the "real is the rational," that to question the "real" is to undermine the primordial goals of American public administration?

Such questions make many in public administration understandably nervous. And although one reaction is to be defensive about asking these polemical questions in the first place, they do focus on a central point: is public administration's public purpose always restricted to responding to state direction, or does it entail broader social responsibilities? Does the field's responsibility to the public stop at the institutional gates of the state? The difficulty in answering these questions stems, in part, from the widely-held assumption that, because public administration serves the needs of the state, it also serves the needs of the public, as if the public and the state are one in the same.¹⁴ Terry Cooper exposes the fallacy of this notion quite effectively:

. . . the etymology of the term public indicates a breadth and depth of meaning that transcends government. Its most fundamental denotations are the shared, communal, universally accessible dimensions of collective life, as well as those things which have general impact upon the interest of all; the realm of interdependence. The normative connota-

tions of the word, as found in *res public* have to do with the common good or well being. The state is clearly included in the meaning of the public, but in a secondary apparently derivative status.¹⁵

Even given the confusion that the public and the state are synonymous, Nicholas Henry maintains that the field continues to think of the meaning of the public in institutional terms, i.e., the public's relationship to the state.¹⁶ But this view of the public is too pedantic. It does not confront the issue of citizenship and how it can be cultivated. This is not to imply that public administration does not play a pivotal role, if not the pivotal role, in addressing public needs within the confines of the state. But does public administration have a concern outside the managerial ethos demanded by the state? As George Will explains, a substantive meaning of the public--

. . . is about the polity, which is much more than government institutions. It includes all the institutions, dispositions, habits and mores on which government depends and on which therefore, government should strive to have a shaping influence. . . . Democratic government must be a tutor as well as a servant to its citizens, because citizenship is a state of mind.¹⁷

What is hinted at here should now be more directly stated: *Public administration's conceptualization of the public must be expanded to include a new public purpose and obligation that enhances the development of citizenship--a citizenship that will be increasingly shaped by societal interdependencies and thus will require a civic perspective of a renewed emphasis on public learning and a revitalized public language.*

What is at stake is a public philosophy of public administration that is not bound to (or victimized by) a pro-state liberalism but to a reconstituted meaning of the public. That is, a public philosophy that can address "the current imbalance between the political order's meticulous concern for material well-being and its fastidious withdrawal from concern for the inner lives and moral character of citizens."¹⁸ Public administration's role in this admittedly ambitious endeavor can be achieved if the field proceeds on the theoretical and pragmatic basis of recognizing the importance of public interdependency, public learning, and a new public language. The following section briefly discusses each of these elements.

The Relevance of Interdependency, Learning, and Language

Rexford Tugwell, one of the early intellectual recruits to the New Deal, lucidly argued in 1950 that Franklin Roosevelt's policies failed to achieve their key purpose because Roosevelt never offered a public philosophy for an interdependent society.¹⁹ What Tugwell inchoately observed is a little clearer today: the growing interdependency of modern life necessitates a new kind of thinking that acknowledges the ecological axiom that everything is now related to everything else. Unfortunately, the field's present propensity is to think in terms of dualities, not

interdependencies. This perspective should come as no surprise since, as Michael Walzer notes, modern liberalism itself preaches and practices the art of separation.²⁰ Or put more candidly, as Gerald Frug argues in the *Harvard Law Review*, liberalism forces one to view the world as a series of complex dualities, thus preventing policymakers from formulating policies for an increasingly interdependent society.²¹ From a somewhat different perspective, Gary Brewer put it this way:

A system becomes more complex as the number of interconnected elements increases; most social systems are both large and highly interconnected. . . . These characteristics largely account for the astonishing diversity of social systems and behavior. Our limited intellectual apparatus, however, prompts us to seek ordered regularity. Our images are poor proxies for reality. Analyses frequently reflect these defective images, and so too do our policies.²²

The point is real even if the language has become difficult. The call for interdependency means that public administration's thinking must readjust to multiple levels of social, political, and economic realities without losing its conceptual footing. In short, the field must not become the conceptual prisoner of a modern liberal philosophy that tries to reduce the richness of interdependency to a series of fragmented political realities. To avoid this fate, public administration must take note of four conditions of interdependency that require rethinking of the field's approach to public affairs:

- Public action occurs in expanding and crowded policy environments in which everything depends on everything else, and power is disbursed and shared by a multiplicity of publics and public actors;
- Capacity for any one government jurisdiction or policy actor to effectively act unilaterally is significantly reduced;
- An enlarged ring of often unforeseen, unintended, or indirect consequences increases vulnerability and openness to outside influences, with public managers increasingly dependent on other individuals and organizations outside of one's view;
- The consequences of policy choices and public actions are often far-ranging, delayed, and have indirect or hidden costs beyond the normal externalities; desirable and undesirable consequences are difficult to separate, and important and often critical second and third-order effects of policy choices may go unnoticed.²³

What does this mean for a public philosophy dealing with the character of citizenship? First, as William Sullivan posits, "it is the general discussion of [societal] interdependency that brings a *public* into being."²⁴ He goes on to state that, "public discussion [of interdependency] aims to bring before the whole civic community an understanding of the *externalities of policy choices* . . . precisely in terms of what pursuing these options will mean for the situation of various groups."²⁵ If public administration takes seriously the interdependent environment in which it oper-

ates, the practice of public administration can no longer be comfortably confined to institutional skyscrapers, but it must be somehow diffused into the communal bungalows where the interdependencies are directly felt. In short, the practice of public administration must be expanded to civic and voluntary associations that mediate between individuals and the state. These associations may thus be transformed into lively democratic laboratories for civic engagement and responsibility. These civic associations, as potential educative vehicles for nurturing citizenship, can serve as vital public forums (with the assistance of public managers) to facilitate critical discussion of the interrelated character of public issues and the implications of public interdependency on the body politic. This approach, of course, does not confront the vexing problem of how to manage the effects of interdependency. Instead, it suggests that the administrator's public stewardship in the future involves increasing the public's understanding of policy under conditions of interdependency and complexity. A step in this direction requires a focus on the need for public learning.

Defined briefly, public learning involves increasing the capacity and knowledge of the public by facilitating politically educative interactions between the public and administrators.²⁶ This learning process is critical because at the heart of any new conceptualization of the public is the importance of democratic political education which implies, as Tocqueville so well understood, "the transformation of commitments, the cultivation of public virtue."²⁷ Saying this, public learning has the following characteristics:

- It assumes that public organizations are more than mere instruments to produce public goods and services; they provide a larger mechanism for political decision making in a democratic polity.
- It focuses on social values, and it seeks critical and reflective awareness by both administrators and the public in order to identify unintended and indirect outcomes or other normative consequences of public action.²⁸
- It is facilitated by an emphasis on a social knowledge transfer and a disaggregated approach to public affairs.

While space does not permit an extended discussion on each of these characteristics, for purposes of brevity the following discussion focuses on disaggregated policy making and social knowledge transfer. What is meant by these two approaches? First, disaggregated policy making refers to a client-oriented approach to policy—an approach that recognizes the unique needs of different publics and the importance of defining those needs in the policy process. In brief, this approach recognizes that public interests and needs cannot be treated as one homogeneous unit by administrators. The public in this regard (as simple as it may sound) is composed of *individuals* who cannot be merged under the analytical category of some aggregate grouping. Robert Biller has correctly emphasized that this forces administrators to confront the fact that they deal with "person[s] [who] bring questions that are uniquely

contextuated in a lifetime's increasingly particular experiences. . . . Persons are different with respect to their unique social histories."²⁹ Biller's central idea is that administrators need to begin experimenting with policies that are designed in a nonaggregate manner, although he is vague about how this can be achieved.

If the importance of Biller's point is accepted, social-knowledge transfer becomes imperative. Social-knowledge transfer refers to the direct exposure of the administrator to the unique knowledge of clients and the provision of a forum for public dialogue and open exchange of information of direct importance to the community. As idealistic as this may sound, M. Brian Murphy, arguing from a similar perspective, makes the point that administrators must "think beyond their own interests, and . . . understand the relationship between their own interests and that of the community, and see themselves as needing the knowledge of public things in order to make better decisions."³⁰

Certainly, not all public goods and services can be delivered in a nonaggregated manner. And, more importantly, how can social-knowledge transfer work given the serious issue of the size and complexity of governmental operations? Benjamin Barber³¹ and Ithiel de Sola Poole³² have provided a hint on how public administration might deal with issues of size and complexity. Barber argues that size is an elastic term because of the growing influence of communication technology. According to Ithiel de Sola Poole, citizens can obtain critical policy information through a nationwide computerized system, if such a system is properly instituted. Furthermore, citizen surveys could be more widely utilized to ascertain public needs. Two scholars, for example, have recently developed what they refer to as a "value stretch methodology."³³ This model attempts to define the specific needs of clients in a large community on a cross-cultural basis. While no one approach can be expected to be entirely effective, public learning must be seen for what it is: a public service that enhances public involvement. That is, it is a process which recognizes that because social problems are shared, they require shared solutions. In this sense, administrators cannot simply view the public as some abstraction, but as part of a public learning process which concretely links the administrator to the unique experiences and knowledge of the community. If nothing else, this is a noble calling. If the need for public learning is taken seriously, leaving aside some of the logistical difficulties, a new public language designed for public dialogue and debate is desperately needed.

The noted historian, Eric Foner, in explaining the relationship between political language and social change, believed that Thomas Paine's philosophical writings helped to spark revolutionary action not only because his ideas struck a political nerve in the American psyche, but also because "Paine helped to transform the meaning of the words of political discourse."³⁴ In public administration, interestingly, scant attention has been given to how political language has shaped views of social reality. It has been left to scholars, like S. G. A. Pocock, to argue

that the lexicon of political language is part and parcel of a political phenomena which serves to support the legitimization of an authoritative structure.³⁵ Political language, in other words, molds political images of reality and thus confines, often unconsciously, approaches congruent to those images.

What is the political language of the United States today? Generally speaking, until World War I, America's political language had a tendency to frame political issues in legal and moral terminology.³⁶ The political language started to change with the growing importance of science, technology, and the modern state. Americans required a new political language more congruent with the spirit of the state, a discourse that would be supportive of a modern economy bent on rationalizing the tempo of economic change. America thus acquired a new public language and a new public philosophy built on the dubious validity of economics. In public policy terms, economics alone seemed able (and willing) to fulfill the dictates of a new public philosophy based on the requisite values of a technocratic and market-centered society.

One of the important virtues of economics is its ability to cloak its terminology under a veil of scientific objectivity. One need not look far to see how this has crept into the political arena: the emphasis of the Reagan Administration on cost-benefit analysis and the sacrosanct worship of the economist's empirical tool kit among professional schools of public affairs, are but two examples. The intellectual baggage, so to speak, that accompanied this approach is not without its price tag. First, the public philosophy described by this language moves public discourse away from such issues as political authority and moral considerations. It remolds them into questions of economic choice. This degradation of political language attempts to "economize" the polity, denying the citizenry a public language with which to discuss, debate, and understand critical political issues. In its crudest form, this economic language transforms political language into expressions that must ultimately conform to economic reasoning with all its adamantly posited assumptions. Sheldon Wolin appropriately describes this public philosophy predicated on economics as anti-political power "because it contains no principle for transcending conflict to find common ground. There is no reconciliation, only winners and losers; there is no basis for common action . . . [and] when the economy becomes the polity, *citizen and community* become subversive words in the vocabulary of the new public philosophy."³⁷

This is not to dismiss the importance of economic analysis. It is, rather, to maintain that public administration accepts this troubling public philosophy at its own peril. It anesthetizes the public by lulling citizens into a false sense of security and into accepting simplistic answers to complex political questions. With a self-interested ethos which is ingrained in the premises of modern economic thought, it is no wonder that a utilitarian calculus based upon one's private interest dominates discussion of policy issues when the reconciliation of the private interest and interdependency must be addressed. Given this situation,

should one really be surprised, as one astute observer declared, "public virtue [becomes] a kind of ghost town into which anyone can move and declare himself sheriff."³⁸

A new public language is needed to confront this reductionistic public philosophy. *It must be a public language that examines the value assumptions of policy decisions and openly explores the relationship of political means to political ends.* It must nurture more sophisticated political judgment that can clarify differing policy choices and constructively address political conflicts. A poignant example of what is referred to here is the issue of economic development. Economic development has been traditionally sold as an attempt to increase jobs; but recently an attempt has been made by citizen groups like the United Neighborhood Organization in Los Angeles to view economic development as interrelated with the broader issues of cultural, social, and educational issues.³⁹ Simply put, economic issues cannot be divorced from the common good of the citizenry. As one research analyst in Los Angeles county put it:

. . . if economic development implies some sort of need for economic self-sufficiency and control over one's destiny, it cannot be effective without the transformation of the citizen. Economic development has been unfortunately too narrowly defined and that's why we sometimes have meager results regardless of the money spent....I think we are beginning to understand that economic development is also an integral part of citizen development.⁴⁰

In brief, economic development is not just about "economic issues." It involves "noneconomic concerns" that economic analysis and reasoning are not designed to address. To explore these noneconomic concerns implies a *public language that gives a primacy to substantive political ends and societal interdependencies over the utility-language of economics.* A public language, in other words, does not use a reified vocabulary that constrains political dialogue or masks its assumptions under the thick fog of sophisticated methodologies. If public administration abdicates the task of developing such a public language, it risks further detachment from reality and continuing decline in public confidence.

Conclusion

But what does this public philosophy mean for the field in general? Having previously touched upon some of the implications of this public philosophy for professional managers, attention should also focus on academic public administration. For purposes of discussion, three important implications for the study of the field are these:

- A shift is needed away from the scientization of social science to an emphasis on developing a *public social science* that refuses to reduce public issues of *public relevancy* into a methodistic framework devoid of normative considerations. A public social science is distinguished by its recognition of the validity of methodological pluralism; that is, the utilization of a variety of

analytical approaches that can encourage a critical, interpretative, and empirical inquiry into public affairs.⁴¹ Methodological flexibility is needed to avoid political reductionism which ignores the public's multi-dimensional substantive needs.

- The field needs to move away from academic discourse that is restricted exclusively to academic circles. Academic scholars need to become *public scholars* who engage citizens in taking interests in knowledge that has public relevance.
- A shift is needed away from the present fixation on a Cartesian educational perspective that is manifested in economics and some management approaches. A more balanced pedagogical view is needed that critically exposes students to the myopic assumptions of these perspectives and their view of the public, especially in regard to interdependency, learning, and public language.

This is hardly a definitive list. Nevertheless, these suggestions force one to reconsider the view that the field can sustain needed credibility and legitimatization by primary dependence on, and devotion to, economy and efficiency. Nor can the field afford to assume a defensive posture by pleading that public administrators are often unduly scapegoated and that candidates for public office should show respect for the public bureaucracy and its cadre of competent and dedicated careerists. Obviously, these concerns need to be conveyed to the public at large. But to be content with these strategies as the answer to public administration's difficulties merely blinds those in the field to the real challenges that confront it.

Yet, like so many other social sciences, a manichean conflict pervades the field: many sense the shortcomings of a public philosophy built on scientific rationality that debases the public realm. Yet, the old positivist framework appears to provide protection from political subjectivism and supports services to the state. This conflict leaves public administration with the disconcerting prospect that efficiency is its own legitimacy and that "what works" is the theoretical adhesive for the field's actions. These are not bad things in themselves, but they are hardly enough for public administration or for the public to live by. In the end, the real issues which confront the field remain the old ones: authority and purpose. And the old answers of Western political thought remain strong answers: democratic citizenship in search for human dignity. The challenge of public administration continues to be to facilitate that sort of constitutional self governance.

* * *

Curtis Ventriss is Associate Professor and Program Director of the MPA program at the University of Vermont. Previously, he has taught at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Southern California. He is coauthor of *Public Health in a Retrenchment Era: An Alternative to Managerialism* and *Managing Economic Development* (Jossey-Bass).

Notes

Thanks to individuals who provided feedback on earlier drafts of this essay: Professors Phil Cooper, SUNY (Albany), Marshall Dimock, and anonymous editorial referees. Thanks also to Donna Ventriss, Suzanne Bacon, and to Dawn Wales for assistance. This is a shortened version of the article that will be published in *Democracy and Bureaucracy: A Minnowbrook Perspective*.

1. Richard H. Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams* (New York: Harper, 1973), p. 84.
2. Cited in Lewis A. Coser and Irving Howe, *The New Conservatives* (New York: Quadrangle, 1973), p. 8.
3. Louis C. Gawthrop, "Civis, Civitas, and Civilitas: A New Focus for the Year 2000," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 44 (March 1984), p. 103.
4. Chester A. Newland, *Public Administration and Community: Realism in the Practice of Ideals* (McLean, VA: Public Administration Service, 1984), p. 6.
5. Hugo Hecl, "Reaganism and the Search for a Public Philosophy," in John Palmer, ed., *Perspectives on the Reagan Years* (Washington: Urban Institute, 1986), pp. 37-49.
6. Consult the following evidence that demonstrates that Reagan's policies do not reflect a conservative public philosophy held by the general public: Vincente Navarro, "The 1984 Election and the New Deal: An Alternative Perspective," *Social Policy* (Spring 1983), pp. 3-10; John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson, *New Directions in American Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1986).
7. Consult Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York: New York University Press, 1975).
8. Barry D. Karl, "The American Bureaucrat: A History of a Sheep in Wolves' Clothing," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 47 (January/February 1987), p. 31.
9. See Emmanuel Wald, "Toward a Paradigm of Future Public Administration," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 32 (May/June 1973), pp. 366-372.
10. Cited in Ralph C. Chandler, *A Centennial History of the American Administrative State* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 300.
11. Morton H. Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society* (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 229. Some of the ideas in this section are drawn from Curtis Ventriss, "Two Critical Issues of American Public Administration," *Administration and Society*, vol. 19 (May 1987), pp. 31-34.
12. Edward O. Laumann and David Knoke, "The Increasingly Organizational State," *Society*, vol. 25 (January/February 1988), p. 23.
13. Curtis Ventriss, "Two Critical Issues of American Public Administration," p. 32. Although never mentioning public administration by name, Robert Nisbet makes this claim in his book, *The Quest for Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).
14. See David Mathews, "The Public in Practice and Theory," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 44 (March 1984), pp. 120-125.
15. Terry L. Cooper, "The Public and Private Dimensions: From Dichotomy to Interdependence" (unpublished manuscript, 1984), p. 3. For space reasons, the difference between public and private cannot be discussed here.
16. Nicholas Henry, "Considering the Cornerstone Questions: Resurrecting the Public Private Distinction," *Eleventh Conference on Teaching Public Administration* (Atlanta, GA: March 24, 1988), p. 7.
17. George F. Will, *Statecraft as Soulcraft* (New York: Touchstone, 1983), p. 24.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
19. Rexford Tugwell, "The New Deal: The Progressive Tradition," *Western Political Quarterly*, vol. III (September 1950), pp. 390-427.
20. Michael Walzer, "Liberalism and the Art of Separation," *Political Theory*, vol. 12 (October 1984), pp. 309-320.
21. Gerald Frug, "The City as a Legal Concept," *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 93 (Fall 1980), pp. 1060-1078.
22. Gary Brewer, "Decisionmaking and Limits of Technique," in P. Schorr, ed., *Critical Cornerstones of Public Administration* (Boston: Oelgeschlagen, Gunn, and Hain, 1985), p. 110.
23. See Curtis Ventriss and Jeff Luke, "Organizational Learning and Public Policy" (unpublished manuscript, 1988), pp. 23-25. Also see Jeff Luke, "Managing Interconnectedness: The Need for Catalytic Leadership," *Futures Research Quarterly*, vol. 17 (Winter 1986), pp. 73-82.
24. William Sullivan, *Reconstructing Public Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 166.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
26. See Curtis Ventriss and Jeff Luke, "Organizational Learning and Public Policy," p. 2.
27. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Mentor, 1956), pp. 207-220.
28. See Clarence N. Stone, "Efficiency versus Social Learning: A Reconsideration of the Implementation Process," *Policy Studies Review*, vol. 4 (February 1985). The following discussion parallels my discussion in "Two Issues of American Public Administration," pp. 41-42.
29. Robert P. Biller, "Toward Public Administration rather than an Administration of Publics," in Ross Clayton and William Storm, eds., *Agenda for Public Administration* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1979).
30. M. Brian Murphy, "Towards a Theory of Democratic Planning" (unpublished manuscript, 1983), p. 17.
31. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
32. Ithiel de Sola Poole, *Talking Back: Citizen Feedback and Cable Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973).
33. Baruch Kipnis and Curtis Ventriss, "Operationalizing Quality of Life Issues: From General Goals to Workable Objectives" (unpublished manuscript, 1985).
34. Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).
35. J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time* (New York: Atheneum, 1973).
36. This discussion is drawn from Sheldon Wolin, "The New Public Philosophy," *Democracy*, vol. 1 (October 1981), pp. 23-36.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
38. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 58.
39. See Curtis Ventriss and Robert Pecorella, "Community Participation and Modernization: A Re-examination of Political Choices," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 44 (May/June 1984).
40. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
41. Richard Bernstein, *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), p. 235.